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An Alternative Framework for Agent Recruitment: From MICE to RASCLS

Randy Burkett

> ***“Today’s* [agent] *recruiters must learn and use the significant breakthroughs in understanding of human motivations and the means for influencing them that have occurred since the early 1980s.”***

Ask any CIA National Clandestine Service officer what his or her mission is and the likely reply will be “to recruit spies to steal secrets and conduct covert action.” This mission has been relatively unchanged since the founding of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) on 13 June 1942. What has changed is the profile of the people we ask to become agents to steal the secrets and engage in covert action. In this article I will discuss how we trained OSS and CIA officers to find and recruit the people who became our agents.

The story starts with World War II, when OSS officers were largely focused on appealing to the patriotism of people to resist foreign occupiers. There was no overall strategy for finding the right agents other than linking up with local activists and appealing to their national pride. The paper then moves to the Cold War when the focus for recruitment shifted to state actors who had the placement and access to betray the secrets of the communist governments in power. During the Cold War period and today, agents who agreed to spy are said to do so for reasons that imply weakness or vulnerability: money, ideology, blackmail, or ego. These factors are captured in the mnemonic MICE. It is a framework that I believe has outlived its usefulness. Today’s recruiters of agents abroad often pursue non-state actors with complex mixtures of competing loyalties, including family, tribe, religion, ethnicity, and nationalism.

I argue that today’s recruiters must learn and use the significant breakthroughs in understanding of human motivations and the means for influencing people that have occurred since the early 1980s. In particular, I will discuss the work of Dr. Robert Cialdini and how his six influence factors, reciprocation, authority, scarcity, commitment (and consistency), liking, and social proof—RASCLS—could be applied to motivate potential agents to agree to spy and to improve the productivity of existing agents.

However, before I look at how we have trained officers to recruit in the past and how we should recruit in the future, I think we should first examine what we are asking people to do when they become spies.

Is Spying Rational in the Face of the Risks?

On the surface, committing espionage appears to be less than rational. Agents risk death, either at the hands of an enemy or by their own legal systems. Even some countries that do not impose the death penalty

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for criminal acts make exceptions for spies.

Spies risk lengthy imprisonment if caught. Even in peacetime settings, if not imprisoned, exposed spies will almost certainly lose whatever job they had, their reputations, and possibly their families and friends. Given these risks, why would a rational person agree to become an agent for a foreign power? Why endure the fear of compromise, make the effort to collect and deliver secrets, and live a double life for years on end when the rewards for your work cannot be openly enjoyed without risking being caught and punished?

Arguably, this question was more easily answered during WW II and the Cold War, when enemies were encountered daily and relatively easily identified. Espionage represented opportunities to strike back. However, even in wartime, it is easier for individuals to sit back, let others take the risks, and hope their work will result in victory and rewards for everyone.

Overcoming this "free rider dilemma" may have been easier for the OSS officer working in occupied countries, particularly as the war appeared to turn against the Axis powers and peer pressure increased on citizens of occupied countries to prove they played some part in resistance movements and were not collaborators. In both war and peace, the potential agent had to come to the conclusion that the potential benefits of agreeing to spy were greater than the potential costs of inaction.[1]

The need to address and minimize risks while maximizing benefits is at the heart of successful agent recruitment. From the beginning, OSS professionals recognized that art and science was involved in recruiting agents for paramilitary and clandestine intelligence missions. The same was true in the training of the OSS officers who would acquire and handle agents.[2] Psychologists in the still developing field of "operational psychology" were integral to selecting OSS officers and teaching them to recruit foreign agents in the field.[3]

Agent Recruitment Training in the OSS

Despite the contributions of the operational psychologists, there was still more art than science in the training OSS officers received in the recruitment and handling of agents.

While most histories of the OSS tend to focus on its paramilitary activities under the Special Operations (SO) branch, the lesser known Secret Intelligence (SI) branch was also a core part of the OSS from the start. The SI branch opened its formal training school in May 1942, when OSS was still the Office of the Coordinator of Information. While SO students focused on learning basic commando skills, leading resistance groups, and penetrating defense plants to collect information, SI students concentrated on less direct measures—agent recruitment, handling, and communications. However, both the SO and SI branches included elements of the others' training.[4]

A review of the syllabi for the Preliminary Training School, the Advanced Training School, and the SI Specialist School of the OSS shows agent recruitment and handling was not discussed at all in the Preliminary Training School. Only two of the 50 blocks of instruction in the Advanced Training School were focused on this subject. SI officers received one additional block of instruction on "rating of sources" in the 10 classes that made up their "Specialist School."[5]

Despite the relatively short time spent on these subjects, OSS offi-

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[1] Overcoming the "free rider dilemma" is the reason CIA case officers are taught to "put the benefits up front" in their recruitment pitches, though it is unlikely that more than a handful could justify this approach beyond saying, "That is how I was taught."

[2] The word "agent" was often used in the OSS to refer both to OSS officers and the people they recruited, which can often be confusing. I will only use the word to refer to the person being recruited to obtain secrets or carry out covert activities. I will refer to the person recruiting the agent as either "officer" or "case officer."

[3] For a full account of this process in the early days of the OSS, see OSS Schools and Training Branch, *Assessment of Men: Selection of Personnel for the Office of Strategic Services*, available in GoogleBooks.

[4] For details of OSS training see John Whiteclay Chambers II, "Office of Strategic Services Training During World War II," *Studies in Intelligence 54, No. 2* (June 2010), available on www.cia.gov.

[5] SO Training Syllabus No. 42, approved by OSS Director Colonel Donovan, 30 August 1942. Accessed on CIA FOIA website, June 2012.

cers were instructed that "Recruiting is a very vital operation and requires firstly—good information. Secondly—successful and careful planning."[6] OSS recruiters were instructed to approach recruiting agents along the lines shown below.

This list of suggestions, starting with "survey the pool of potential agents and put quality first" and ending with "Do Not Try to Buy People," constituted the foundation of agent recruitment tradecraft for the OSS officer. While some of the suggestions may sound familiar to current trainees, much of what would now be considered key first steps of the agent recruitment cycle were left to the imagination and creativity of the OSS officer.[7]

OSS Steps to Recruitment

- Survey the locality: state of local opinion, industry, and occupations.
- Consider the types of spies needed—insiders, specialists, cutouts, accommodation addresses, couriers, collectors of imported material, stores of material, headquarters, women.
  - •Survey potential agents—It is from ranks of an informant service that first recruits are most likely to be drawn (emphasis added)—many of the remainder will be indicated by the same means.
  - •Put quality first—a bad agent will jeopardize an organization. Get full information about a potential agent before approaching him e.g. interests, weaknesses, character, religion, politics, nationality, etc.
  - •Approach to potential agents—Get to know your man.
    - •Self-introduction
    - •Introduction by mutual friend
    - •Coming down to business—Change your line of appeal to suit the case, e.g. for a priest, based on religious grounds, etc.
    - •Let any concrete suggestions come from him in the first stages.
    - •Test reactions thoroughly before coming out into the open.
    - •Sound by half-suggestions.
    - •Leave yourself a way out in the event of refusal.
    - •From the first give him an impression that we are part of a powerful and well organized body—prestige counts heavily.
- **DO NOT TRY TO BUY PEOPLE** (emphasis in original)

The Cold War Perspective

The warning at the end of this list, "Do Not Try to Buy People," marks a sharp distinction between WW II approaches and those of the Cold War, when the injunction lost much of its force. Today, when asked the question "Why do people spy?" the average case officer would respond with four words: "Money, Ideology, Compromise, and Ego"—MICE—and money would be the motive that most quickly comes to mind.

MICE: Money

On the surface, money, or what money can provide (such as security, education for children, a better living standard, or a ticket out of an undesirable environment), seems to be a rational reason to take on the risks of spying. Certainly a long list of individuals who have volunteered to provide intelligence to their country's enemies have cited the need for money as their reason. In a study of 104 Americans who spied and were caught between 1947 and 1989, the majority, indeed an increasing number over the years studies, reported that money was their sole or primary motivator.[8] For example, early Cold Warrior, GRU Lieutenant Colonel Pyotr Popov, sold Soviet secrets to the Americans in Vienna in 1953 in order to maintain both a wife and a mistress. Starting during the Cold War and continuing after the Iron Curtain had fallen, CIA officer Aldrich Ames, arrested in 1994, sold American secrets to Moscow for an estimated $2.7 million.[9]

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[6] Ibid, 4–5.

[7] The agent recruitment cycle will be more fully discussed in the next section. For purposes of this paper it is the process of obtaining HUMINT agents to meet national intelligence needs. The six stages of the cycle are spotting, assessing, developing, recruiting, handling/training, and turning over the agent to a new officer or terminating contact with the agent.

[8] Katherine L Herbig, *Changes in Espionage by Americans: 1947–2007*, Department of Defense Technical Report 08-05, March 2008. During the initial 32 years of the study, 47 percent of the spies then active claimed to be in it for the money. That percentage grew among those revealed between 1980 and 1989 to 74 percent.

To understand what factors were really at play, we will have to look beyond MICE.

Both men were caught and punished. Popov, who was probably paid a few thousand dollars over the course of his agent career, spent his money carefully and was most likely betrayed by the British spy, George Blake.[10] Ames helped reveal himself by spending his ill-gotten gains openly. As a GS-14 making less than $70,000 a year, Ames not only purchased a house for more than $500,000 in cash, he made the additional mistake of buying a $40,000 Jaguar he drove to work.[11]

Popov's career as an agent ended in 1958 with a bullet to the back of the head, and Ames' employment as an agent ended in 1994 with a life sentence. Looking at the monetary benefits alone, it would be hard to argue that the short-term rewards—five years of the good life in Popov's case and nine years for Ames—was worth the price each paid. However, as we will see, it is likely that money was *not* the only motivating factor in either of these cases. To understand what factors were really at play, we will have to look beyond MICE.

MICE: Ideology

More than the "venal" recruit who pursues money, an ideologically driven agent is seen as a much greater threat by counterintelligence (CI) officers. For CIA recruiters, agents who serve for reasons of belief are the only agents that most officers can truly respect. US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) senior analyst Ana Belen Montes admitted to spying for Cuba for more than 16 years and was paid no salary other than her DIA GS-15 wage.[12] GRU Colonel Oleg Penkovsky, sometimes called "The Spy Who Saved the World" for his contributions during the Cuban Missile Crisis, spied for the CIA and British MI6 jointly between 1961 and 1963, with only the promise of being "taken care of" if he decided to leave the Soviet Union and settle in the West.[13]

One of the most amazing agents of all, MI6's Harold A. R. (Kim) Philby, who was considered a candidate to lead Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in the 1950s, spied for the Soviet Union without compensation from 1933 until he defected to the USSR in 1961.[14] All three agents said they spied for the same reason, ideology.

Clearly an agent committed to an ideology can be a powerful weapon. One wonders how agents like Montes and Philby could not only function year after year while immersed in a political system they opposed but actually thrive and be repeatedly promoted by the very people they were betraying.[15] Both Montes and Philby only ended their spying careers when exposed or about to be exposed. Montes was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to a long prison term. Philby defected to the USSR, where he lived as a Soviet citizen until his death in 1988. Was it just zealotry that drove individuals like Montes and Philby to live double lives for decades? Or were there other factors at work?

MICE: Coercion or Compromise

Coercion or compromise (blackmail) provide relatively easy-to-understand reasons agents take on the risks of espionage—as seen in countless movies and CI training films.[16] Both factors appear in many past spy cases. Compromise most often occurs when potential agents make mistakes and come to believe they must seek the assistance of a

[9] For good discussions of Pyotr Popov see John L. Hart's, "Pyotr Semyonovich Popov: The Tribulations of Faith," *Intelligence and National Security* 12 (1977) or William Hood's, *Mole: The True Story of the First Russian Intelligence Officer Recruited by the CIA* (Norton and Company, 1982).
[10] Norman Palmer, *Spy Book: The Encyclopedia of Espionage* (Random House Reference, 1996), 446.
[11] Ibid, 22.
[12] See Steve Carmichael, *True Believer: Inside the Investigation and Capture of Ana Montes, Cuba's Master Spy* (US Naval Institute Press, 2007).
[13] Although Penkovsky was never able to enjoy his life in the West, his family was cared for, both through money banked for him and the proceeds of the commercial sale of a book based on his life. The CIA secretly arranged the publication of The Penkovsky Papers, presented as his "diary" and funneled the bulk of the profits to his family. See the CIA FOIA under "Penkovsky."
[14] An exhaustive study of both Kim Philby and his equally fascinating father can be found in Anthony Cave Brown's, *Treason in the Blood* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994).
[15] Montes received multiple awards for "exceptional analytic work" and was promoted to GS-15. Philby was repeatedly promoted, to the point that he came very close to becoming director of MI6.
[16] A large sample of such films is available on YouTube. One good example is "The Enemy Agent & You," a counterespionage film made by the Department of Defense in 1954 (DOD IS 7).

foreign intelligence agency to avoid punishment.

Compromise and coercion were clearly prime concerns of CI officials during the Cold War. Anyone with a security clearance was warned that any illegal or "deviant" behavior as defined in the day put a person at risk of being blackmailed into spying. Stories abound in both fiction and nonfiction of officials being coerced on account of their illicit sexual behavior, whether it was homosexuality or adultery resulting from being caught in the "honey traps" set by the infamous Soviet "sparrow squads."[17]

In addition to these sordid stories, CIA officers also knew that many of their brethren in the FBI and other US law enforcement agencies regularly coerced informants, often overlooking criminal offenses or working to mitigate consequences in exchange for cooperation.

People coerced into espionage rarely make ideal agents. While FBI and other law enforcement officials may be able to offer a choice between jail and cooperation, it is actively discouraged in CIA training. Coercion often creates agents who are angry, resentful, and only willing to do just enough to avoid whatever punishment may await them. This is not the type of agent a case officer wants to meet in a foreign country, where both may be violating local laws by their interaction and where agents have more opportunities to double cross or take violent action against a case officer.

People coerced into espionage rarely make ideal agents.

MICE: Ego or Excitement

The final letter in MICE can stand for "Ego" or "Excitement." Of the two, ego satisfaction appears to be the more prevalent driver. Spy fiction may portray espionage as an exciting world of gun battles, explosions, car chases, and sexual adventures, but anyone who has lived in this world knows the truth is very different. For every hour spent on a street a case officer will spend many hours more writing up the results of the last meeting, preparing for the next meeting, and endlessly evaluating current cases and constantly looking for new assets. For the agent's part, the life is usually equally dull and demanding. Successful agents must continue to perform in whatever jobs provide them the access for which they were recruited in the first place, all the while meeting the tasks levied by case officers.

Agents must also prepare for and securely move to and from meetings, and, if they are good, they will constantly be looking for new ways to meet the information needs of the organization they secretly serves. A double life is not an easy life as evidenced by the number of agents who burn out, break down, or simply decide they cannot continue, particularly in high risk environments. Agents often either stop producing or start making so many mistakes that case officers must suspend the relationships for the safety of both parties.

Excitement, if it exists, is fleeting, but reinforcement of an agent's self-confidence, or ego, can go a long way toward maintaining the agent's productivity. As part of this dynamic, one often finds a desire for revenge or retaliation as a motivator. Examples include the disgruntled professional diplomat; the passed-over military officer who would not "play politics"; the intelligence officer sidelined for a drinking problem; or the law enforcement official forced to moonlight as a security guard to make ends meet. Under the MICE framework, these are all agents waiting to be recruited. They only need to have egos stroked and to be given the chance to harm a system that has wronged them. Such reasons may provide good beginnings on the road to espionage, but will they keep agents on that road for decades? How then might case officers move beyond MICE to solidify and optimize the long-term commitment of a productive agent?

From MICE to RASCLS

Although MICE provides superficial explanations for spying, it fails to capture the complexities of human motivation. For example, let us return to the case of Aldrich Ames. In 1985, he walked into the Soviet embassy in Washington DC with the stated intent of avoiding bankruptcy by trading information on assets suspected of being double agents for $50,000.[18]

This was to be a one-time only exchange. The Soviet embassy's KGB chief of counterintelligence,

[17] Even the Russian news organization *Pravda* openly reported on the use of sexual blackmail by the KGB, see "KGB Sex Espionage," *Pravda*, 7 August 2002.

[18] Pete Earley, *Confessions of a Spy: The Real Story of Aldrich Ames* (Berkley Books, 1998), 147.

By subscribing too fully to the limited MICE framework, officers risk misreading their agents.

Victor Cherkashin, accepted Ames' information, paid him the $50,000, and then masterfully ensured that this first encounter would not be the last. Cherkashin did not threaten or otherwise coerce Ames. Instead, he worked to earn his confidence and drew him into a shared effort to protect him:

> *"Look," I continued, exaggerating, but not really dissembling, "our main concern—our one concern—is your security. I want you to know that for certain. Everything else is secondary. You tell me what you want us to do and we'll do it. We'll play by any rules you give us."*

Cherkashin continued:

> *It's in your interest to tell us as much as you can about any of your agents inside the KGB.… How can we protect you if we don't know who's in a position to inform the CIA about you? If you're concerned about your security, it's up to you* and *us to minimize the danger for you. We need to know whom to protect you from.*

With that,

> [Ames] *took out a notepad and paper and began writing down a list of names. He tore out the page and handed it to me. I was shocked. That piece of paper contained more information about CIA espionage than had ever before been presented in a single communication. It was a catalog of virtually every CIA asset within the Soviet Union. Ames said nothing about whether the men he'd listed should be arrested or removed. "Just make sure these people don't find anything out about me," he said.*[19]

What happened here? Was this a simple case of money starting a relationship, with concern about compromise just adding to it? Are these two motives sufficient to explain the actions of Ames? The MICE framework, even allowing for two factors at work, is not sufficient to understand his motivations and behavior.

Human motivations are far more complex. By subscribing too fully to the limited MICE framework, officers risk misreading their agents and take actions harmful to their operations. For example, by attributing an agent's cooperation to a simple need for money, a case officer makes the mistake of causing a committed agent to feel merely like hired help. Post-WW II operations officer Christopher Felix put it this way in his *Short Course on the Secret War*:

> *Time and again I have seen American case officers resort to cutting off funds to enforce discipline over an agent. One effect of this maneuver, if successful, is ultimately to reduce the agent to the status of a mere pensioner. In espionage operations this can, and often does, result in highly unreliable information; in a political operation it can be fatal.*[20]

Case officers who rely exclusively on the MICE framework risk failing to see the full complexities involved in an agent's decision to spy and will miss opportunities to persuade and motivate agents to improve their performance. Instead, they will focus on taking advantage of vulnerabilities to exercise control. Over time, the negative focus could lead case officers to view and treat their agents as fundamentally flawed human beings who need to be punished or coerced into compliance.

The work of psychologist Dr. Robert Cialdini offers more positive approaches. His six "weapons of mass influence"— reciprocation, authority, scarcity, commitment/consistency, liking, and social proof—provide a better foundation for agent recruitment and handling.[21]

Cialdini's Six Principles

To understand why the RASCLS principles are so important, case officers must understand that humans have developed shortcuts to

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[19] Victor Cherkashin with Gregory Feifer, *Spy Handler, Memoir of a KGB Officer: The True Story of the Man who Recruited Robert Hanssen and Aldrich Ames* (Basic Books, 2005), 27–29.

[20] Christopher Felix, *A Short Course in the Secret War* (E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1963), 54.

[21] Robert Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (Quill/William Morrow, 1984). Cialdini is the source of the six principles of influence, but my friend and colleague Steve Kleinman was the first to codify these principles under the mnemonic RASCLS.

function in a world full of sights, sounds, and other stimuli flooding human senses. These shortcuts Cialdini calls "fixed actions patterns," which are patterns of behavior that occur in the same order and sequence every time a given stimulus is introduced. In the animal world these fixed patterns are easily observed in courtship and mating rituals. They have evolved because humans need them too. Otherwise, as Cialdini observes, "We would stand frozen—cataloging, appraising, and calibrating—as the time for action sped by and away."[22]

The universal human responses to these six principles help people interact with less friction and, for the most part, provide benefits. However, some individuals have become quite skilled in using these principles to manipulate others into acting against their best interests. These "compliance professionals," as Cialdini labels them, are found, for example, among sales people, fundraisers, and "confidence artists." The keys to their success, according to Cialdini, are that they understand the principles of influence and persuasion and they have learned how to manipulate without appearing to be manipulative.

By understanding Cialdini's six principles, case officers could also become, in effect, better compliance specialists, with deeper understanding of their tradecraft and greater ability to see opportunities to find and recruit agents from a population beyond those defined by the vulnerabilities exploitable in the MICE framework.

Some individuals ["compliance professionals"] *have become quite skilled in using these principles to manipulate others into taking actions that are not necessarily in their best interests.*

RASCLS in the Agent Recruitment Cycle

Before diving into the details of RASCLS, we need to understand more deeply how case officers work. The systematic method for finding agents who will meet national intelligence information needs is called the Agent Recruitment Cycle (ARC). It consists of six steps:

- spotting (or identifying) individuals who can meet intelligence needs as identified by analysts or policymakers
- assessing whether the spotted individuals have the placement and access to provide desired information as well as beginning the process of determining their motivations, vulnerabilities, and suitability
- developing a relationship with the individual to further assess the factors above and to explore whether they will be responsive to initial tasking for intelligence information
- the actual recruitment
- training and handling meetings with the agent, including taskings and debriefings
- either turning an agent over to another case officer or terminating the relationship

Successful case officers move agents through this cycle by using many of the principles of RASCLS without realizing the psychology behind their successes. Within the CIA these officers are often called "natural recruiters," and because their skills are not well understood and believed to be inherent, CIA trainers miss opportunities to help case officer trainees develop their potential to become compliance specialists capable of fully applying the RASCLS principles.

RASCLS: Reciprocation

"Always provide amenities." This is one of the earliest lessons taught to case officers in their training. Whether the meeting is to be an extended discussion in a hotel or a quick talk in a moving car, the case officer is told to always have something for the role-player agent to eat and drink. If a student asked "why," (which was never encouraged), the likely reply would be "to build rapport" or the old standby, "that is the way I was taught." It is an honest question that deserves a better response.

The true answer lies in the principle of reciprocation: all humans feel an obligation to try to repay in kind what another person has provided. According to Cialdini, there is no human society that does not abide by this rule.[23] We see the power of this principle reflected in innumerable cultures that insist on sharing tea or other refreshments before "getting down to business." In American cul-

[22] Ibid., 7.
[23] Ibid., 18.

Case officers also must understand the power inherent in their relationships with agents.

ture the counterparts are business dinners, luncheons, or cocktail hours used for rapport-building and development of a shared sense of obligation.

The principle of reciprocation is almost always employed at the beginning of a recruitment cycle. One of the easiest ways for a case officer to initiate and develop a relationship with a potential agent is to fill some small need the agent has revealed. Whether this is help with a visa, information on academic opportunities in the United States, or just advice on a minor problem, by the small gesture a case officer creates a sense of obligation. At a minimum, the gesture provides a reason for further contact and sets the stage for a case officer to seek a favor in return.

A feeling of obligation can be created without actually giving anything of real value. Cialdini calls this psychological concept "reciprocal concessions" or "rejection and retreat." To illustrate this concept, he tells the story of being approached by a Boy Scout. The boy asked Cialdini if he would like to buy a ticket to a "Boy Scout Circus" for five dollars. When Cialdini did not immediately respond, the scout added "Or, you could buy one of our big chocolate bars. They are only a dollar each." As expected, despite the fact that Cialdini claims not to even like chocolate, two dollars and two chocolate bars soon changed hands.[24] By first offering tickets to the circus, and then immediately following up with a different offer—before the first was openly rejected—the scout appeared to make the first concession, which immediately triggered in Cialdini a feeling of obligation to supply a reciprocal concession.

As he did with all the influence principles in his book, Cialdini field tested the theory of reciprocal concessions through a series of well-documented experiments in which unwitting subjects were offered a poor choice and less onerous second choice. In a statistically significant number of the cases, those offered the "rejection and retreat" scenario agreed to the secondary request, while those offered only the lesser choice declined. As a bonus, researchers found that once a commitment was made to the less onerous choice, the subject was even more susceptible to future requests. These phenomena will be further discussed under "commitment and consistency," but the benefits for the case officer are clear: favors or gifts given to a potential agent early in a relationship are more likely to create feelings of obligation. Then as a relationship develops, case officers can use rejection and retreat to make initial taskings seem less burdensome and create an atmosphere in which future taskings will appear to be less onerous.

RASCLS: Authority

The OSS advice, "From the first give an impression that we are part of a powerful and well organized body—prestige counts heavily," still rings true. From childhood we are taught that compliance with authority brings rewards while resistance brings punishment. Most operational cover stories are built to give CIA officers the air of authority—through some official government status or the appearance of a successful businessperson. In both cases, officers are encouraged to "look the part" in their dress or with props.

The air of authority gives case officers advantages in the agent recruitment process. In the development phase, case officers will often demonstrate their authority by indicating they have special positions or powers beyond whatever jobs they claim to hold in the US government or business. These may include, for example, the power to hire and richly reward consultants. This air of authority can be especially magnified in the recruitment phase, particularly if case officers can suggest they have the prestige of the US government behind the developing relationship.

Case officers also must understand the power inherent in their relationships with agents. As Felix pointed out, "The case officer represents the authority which defines the objectives of the operation, and he controls the resources which make the operation possible."[25] Optimally this control will be implicit rather than explicit. Threatening to withhold money to exert control represents a failure to develop optimal influence over the agent. In addition to the authority inherent in a case officer's position relative to an agent, the case

[24] Ibid., 36.
[25] Felix, 47.

officer's strongest claim to authority is greater knowledge of the operational environment, of which the agent can only be partly aware. A case officer must be able to convince an agent that, although the agent is a key partner in an operation, the agent is not the case officer's only resource.

Under the MICE framework, case officers too often have gotten caught up in discussions over how much "control" they have over a source, which often has led to attempts to tie control to something measurable, like money. This battle for control is a reflection of the generally negative attributes of MICE. If an agent is only in a relationship for money, then money does represent control. A better discussion would include measures of case officer levels of influence over sources. Measures of influence that are sometimes mislabeled as control include the following:

- Does an agent fully disclose subsources of information?
- Has an agent attempted to established limits to subjects he will and will not report about?
- Is an agent willing to admit when he does not know about a topic and will he take reasonable risks to gain that information?
- Is an agent knowingly providing information that would get him in trouble if discovered?
- How closely does an agent adhere to the directions a case officer gives concerning methods of collecting information and moving to and from meetings?

By building this sense of urgency, a successful case officer will use scarcity to… get agents to commit to new and deeper relationships.

Authority also plays a key role in the handling, training, and turnover phases of the recruitment cycle. Once recruited, an agent should become both more productive (as a result of more direct tasking) and more cautious (as a result of training). Case officers must appear to be confident and skilled in the tradecraft they impart to their agents and, when the time comes for one officer to move on and another to take over, case officers must smoothly transfer their authority to their replacements.

RASCLS: Scarcity

When an item is less available humans tend to believe it is more attractive.[26] Things that are rarer are normally more expensive, and humans tend to equate expense with quality. Also things that are less available may be rare because many others want the same thing—the concept of social proof plays in here (more on that concept later). On a deeper level, when an item or option is offered and then withdrawn, humans tend to desire that item or option even more. This is the concept of "psychological reactance," or as it is more commonly known, the "Romeo and Juliet effect."[27]

Scarcity is a recurrent element of a successful recruitment. Recruitment pitches should make clear to potential agents that they are being presented with fleeting opportunities to act on statements they have made concerning their beliefs, goals, or ideals. But, by emphasizing that any opportunity is fleeting and urging a rapid commitment, a case officer increases the value of the opportunity to replace words with deeds. Case officers might emphasize, for example, that they have superiors who need proof of their agents' utility or they will order relationships ended.

By building this sense of urgency, a successful case officer will use scarcity to overcome the free-rider dilemma and get agents to commit to new and deeper relationships.

RASCLS: Commitment and Consistency

"Prominent theorists such as Leon Festinger, Fritz Hieder, and Theodore Newcomb have viewed the desire for consistency as a central motivator of our behavior."[28] In short, portraying ourselves as "consistent" speaks to who we humans are at our essence. Society generally seems to spurn members who are inconsistent. They are labeled as "untrustworthy" or, in more current political terms, "flip-floppers." At times we even appear to admire consistency over correctness. However we do not always cling to positions simply because we are stubborn.

[26] Or, as Cialdini put it, "Opportunities seem more valuable when their availability is limited." Cialdini, 238.
[27] Cialdini, 244 and 248.
[28] Cialdini, 59.

In the agent recruitment process, small commitments in the development phase … can grow into full recruitments.

Studies have shown we actually tend to increase our confidence in a decision once that decision has been made and particularly if that decision has been made publicly. "Public commitments create more lasting change," even more so if those public commitments are written or otherwise recorded.[29]

Researchers studying Chinese interrogation techniques during the Korean War found that the Communist Chinese exploited this quality of human nature to elicit "confessions" from US POWs to back allegations of US war crimes during the war. [30] They found that the Chinese and North Koreans managed to get US Air Force officers to claim on film that they had dropped "germ bombs" and committed other war crimes, not by threats, torture, or offers of rewards for lying, but by getting prisoners to make public admissions that life was not perfect in the United States and then having them write, expand upon, and defend their declarations. Slowly, trying to be consistent, many of these men came to believe, at least for a time, that they had indeed committed war crimes. Going from "there is some racial inequality" to "the United States is committing genocide in North Korea" was not a path every prisoner would take, but it worked often enough for some propaganda gains for the Chinese and Koreans.

In the agent recruitment process, small commitments in the development phase—for example, mutual agreement that two countries often need informal channels to better understand each other—can grow into full recruitments. Additionally, by convincing a prospective agent to provide the first piece of nonpublic information (for example the classic "internal telephone directory"), the stage is set to ask for more closely held secrets and then use this behavior to justify further cooperation through recruitment. This does not necessarily imply setting up blackmail, but rather an appeal to an agent's desire to remain consistent. By highlighting past agreement to "share data" for the good of both countries, the relationship with a case officer can evolve into one seen as rewarding to both and lay the ground for continued "cooperation."

RASCLS: Liking

"We like people who are like us." Every case officer is taught this simple idea in training. The larger lesson is to find ways to connect with potential agents—similarities in background (the case officer and agent are both sons/daughters, husbands/wives, parents, have similar personality traits), shared interests (sports, hobbies), and general outlook (interested in world affairs, background, life-style). Flattery is highly recommended, for virtually everyone enjoys being praised, and future meetings will come more easily. With additional meetings and more "time on target," a case officer will be better able to conduct a sound assessment process. A warm relationship is also likely to give a case officer insight into a potential agent's areas of low self-esteem or feelings of being undervalued—key pieces of knowledge for a recruiter.

Liking matters throughout the agent recruitment cycle. A case officer creates an ever deeper relationship through the process—from becoming an "associate" then a "friend" in the assessment phases and then moving to the role of "sounding board" and "confidant" as development moves to recruitment. A case officer's goal should be to have a prospective agent come to believe, hopefully with good reason, that the case officer is one of the few people, perhaps the ONLY person, who truly understands him. The agent then can look forward to each meeting as a chance to spend quality time with a comrade he can trust with his life.

RASCLS: Social Proof

By observing others, particularly in unfamiliar environments, humans determine what is "correct behavior." This is what Cialdini and other psychologists call "social proof," and it can be seen in long lines behind velvet ropes at the hottest night clubs or, more darkly, in the

[29] Ibid., 76.

[30] Cialdini, 71–72, and Albert D. Bidderman, "Communist Attempts to Elicit False Confessions from Air Force Prisoners of War," presented at a combined meeting of the Section on Neurology and Psychiatry with the New York Neurological Society at The New York Academy of Medicine, 13 November 1956, as part of a Panel Discussion on "Communist Methods of Interrogation and Indoctrination." The report is based on work done under ARDC Project No. 7733, Task 77314, in support of the research and development program of the Air Force Personnel and Training Research Center, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Permission is granted for reproduction, translation, publication, use, and disposal in whole and in part by or for the United States Government.

behavior of people in cults.[31] The combined effects of social proof and the power of commitment and consistency can explain tragedies like the mass suicide in November 1978 of the Jonestown cult in Guyana and can also be helpful in understanding why Oleg Penkovsky continued to spy even after it was clear Soviet authorities were closing in on him. Once individuals have invested deeply and sacrificed much, they will go to great lengths to hold on to the beliefs to which they had become committed.

Although we cannot put a velvet rope outside our facilities abroad and have agents line up to provide social proof that spying for the United States is the rage, the principle of social proof does apply to agent recruitment and handling. In directing agents, case officers can say, "Other partners I have worked with have brought out documents by doing X." This both serves to encourage an agent should not only to do "X" but reassures the agent that he is doing what others have done successfully as well. Additionally officers can help agents overcome their understandable anxiety by recalling cases of others who have made similar choices, for example, Ryszard Kuklinski or Istvan Belovai, whose actions helped free their countries. However, the ultimate social proof is the presence of the case officer, and implicitly the organization behind the case officer, who provide constant reminders that an agent is doing the right thing.

It will be up to the imagination and creativity of individual case officers to take the principles and turn them into new approaches for recruiting and handling a new generation of agents.

Agents are RASCLS not MICE

Frameworks for understanding agents have advanced significantly with the science of psychology since the days of the OSS. While advice from that era can still be useful today, we now have a much better understanding of the human mind and motivations. The MICE framework was a good step in trying to understand agent behavior but it has often led officers to unduly focus on vulnerabilities and caused case officers to see their assets in a one-dimensional and somewhat negative light.

I believe the RASCLS model is more nuanced, effective, and founded on empirical data drawn from decades of experiments in the social psychology field.

By employing RASCLS we can see that Pyotr Popov did not just spy for money but because his case officer, George Kisevalter, reminded him strongly of his older brother, who had opposed the Soviet regime (the liking and authority principles). Kisevalter gave him the money he needed, but he also helped him appear to be a competent intelligence officer in post-war Vienna (reciprocation). Finally, his case officer reinforced Popov's feelings that the Soviet state had betrayed Russian peasants and only the United States was strong enough to eventually help these people free themselves from their oppressors (commitment and consistency).

In the same way, Cherkashin expertly turned Ames from a one-time contact in need of money into a productive agent by flattering him (liking) and telling him the two men were partners in keeping Ames safe—a partnership that relied on Ames's help (authority, reciprocation). It was a partnership that would allow Ames to enjoy the compensation Cherkashin was ready to supply on a steady basis (commitment and consistency). In the light of the RASCLS model, the actions of each of the spies discussed in this article, Philby, Montes, Ames, and others become more understandable, with lessons that can be applied to other cases.

The above suggestions for using Cialdini's six principles, in my judgment, only touch on the ways in which these principles could be employed in operations. As always, it will be up to the imagination and creativity of individual case officers to take the principles and turn them into new approaches for recruiting and handling a new generation of agents.

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[31] Cialdini, 152–56.